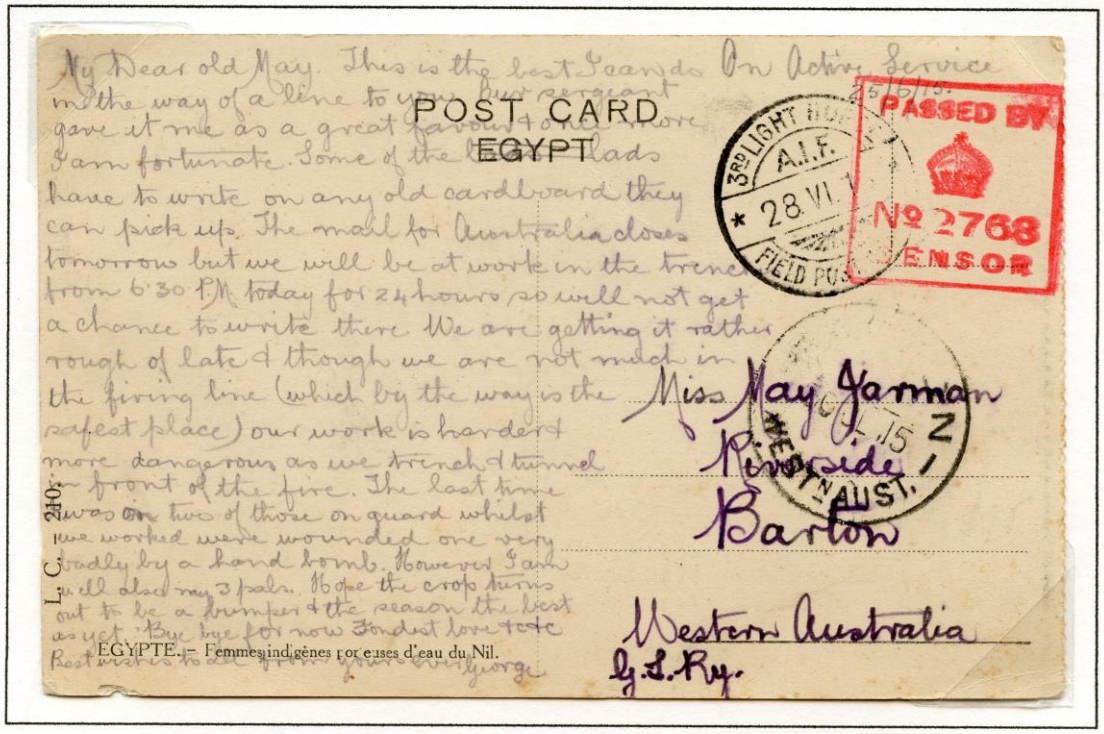
## The Gallipoli Campaign

### The Shortage of Writing Materials

The landing at Gallipoli presented major problems for the soldiers writing home. When the troops landed at ANZAC Cove on the 25th of April 1915, they discarded their packs as they climbed the hills to fight the Turks. By the end of the third week, the Australians had established their positions sufficiently to think of writing home. However, their packs which contained their envelopes and writing paper were never recovered. Besides the intermittent issue of the Field Service Postcards, there was no paper available to write letters home.

### Writing home about the shortage of postcards and writing paper — 29th May - 23rd August 1915

From late May 1915 there are at least half a dozen postcards recorded written home to Australia where the troops complain about the shortage of writing materials. Some (including the postcard below) mention how other soldiers were using "any old cardboard" to write home.




A picture postcard from the 3rd Light Horse Brigade dated the 28th of June 1915 and addressed to Western Australia. By June when this postcard was written, there was an acute shortage of writing materials, which is evidenced in the message on this card:

*"This is the last I can do in the way of a line to you. Our sergeant gave it to me as a great favour and once more I am fortunate. Some of the lads have to write on any old cardboard they can pick up"*

The recorded period of use of the "home made postcards" is from the 29th of May to the 23rd of August, with this card dated in the middle of the shortage of writing materials at Gallipoli.

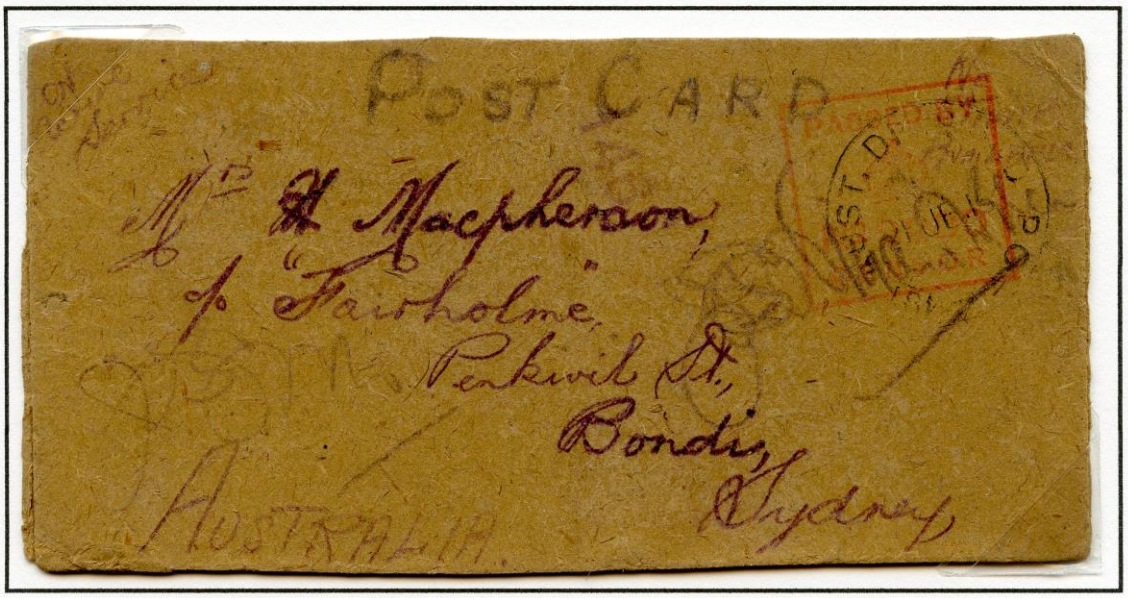
## The Gallipoli Campaign

### The Shortage of Writing Materials

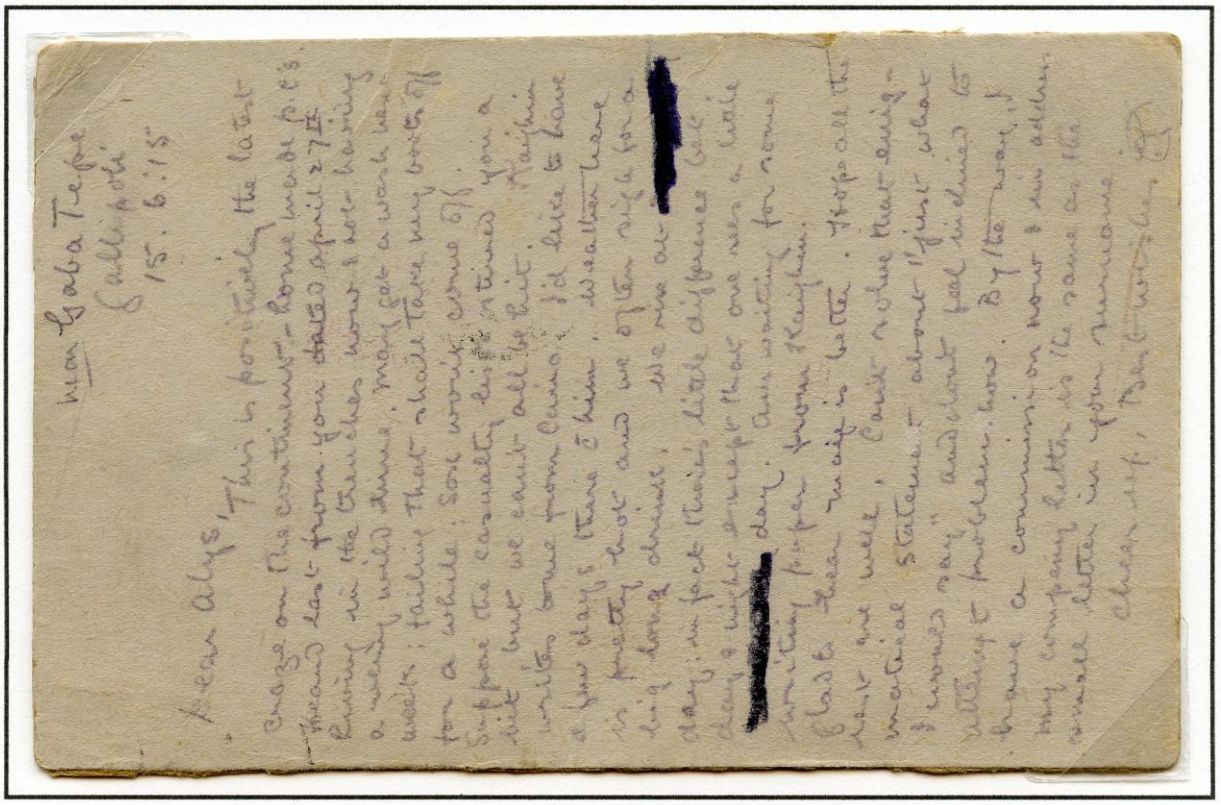
**Ammunition box**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**

Ammunition boxes cut up to form postcards are the most common forms of "home made postcards" encountered, and make up the majority of examples which have come to light. Twenty years ago, it was estimated that about twenty examples of these cards exist in all forms, however, the number is probably closer to fifty cards and envelopes.




An ammunition box cut to produce a postcard cancelled by the 1st Australian Divisional Field post office cds of the 21st of June 1915.

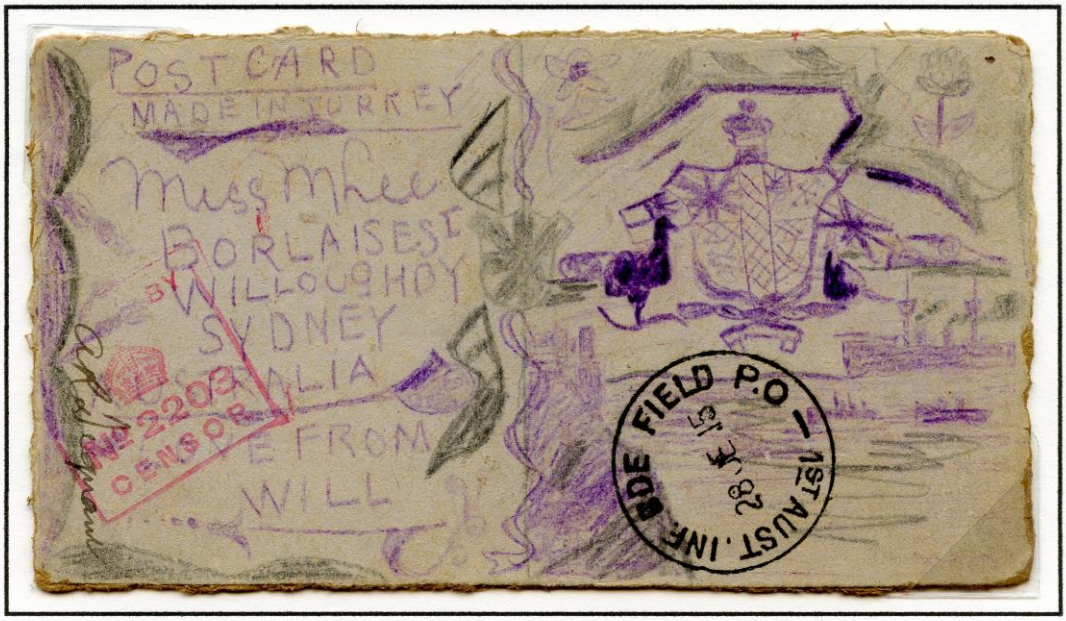


An ammunition box cut to produce a postcard and headed "near Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli", dated the 22nd of June 1915 and addressed to Victoria .

The soldier who wrote this card confirms the absence of writing materials and states ***"This is positively the latest craze on the continent - home made postcards".*** He continues "*we are living in the trenches now & not having a very wild time. May get a wash next week. Suppose the casualty list stirred you a bit, but we can't all be hit…..am waiting for some writing paper from home.*"

## A hand illustrated postcard cut from an ammunition box

A piece of an ammunition box cut to form a postcard dated the 28th of June 1915 and addressed to New South Wales.




What is most unusual about this home made postcard is that it has been illustrated by the soldier with an Australian Coat of Arms and a troopship with landing craft arriving at the Dardanelles. At the top, the card is endorsed "POSTCARD/ MADE IN TURKEY".

The card was written by Private William Lee of the 2nd Infantry Battalion who served throughout the war and returned to Australia on the 9th of March 1919.

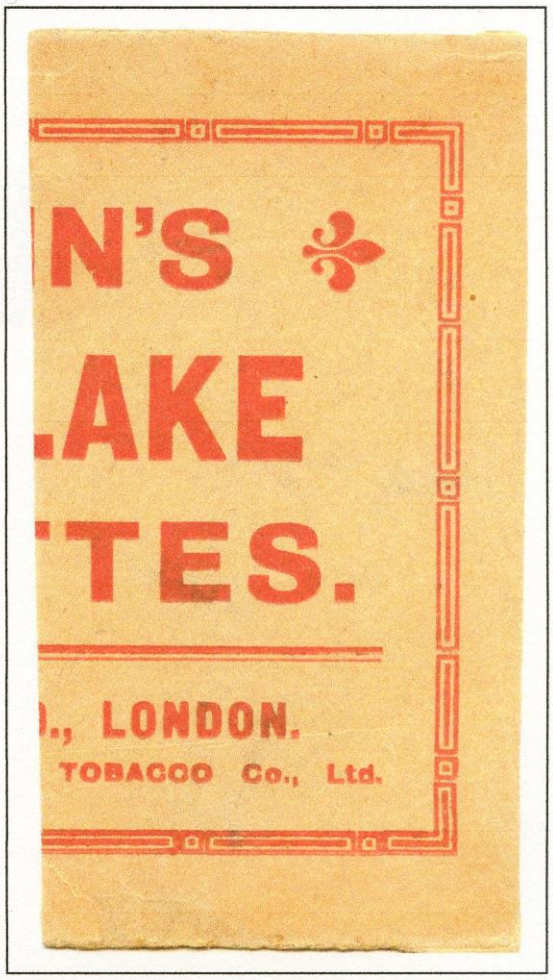
**This is the only illustrated home made post card recorded**

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Drapkins cigarette carton**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**



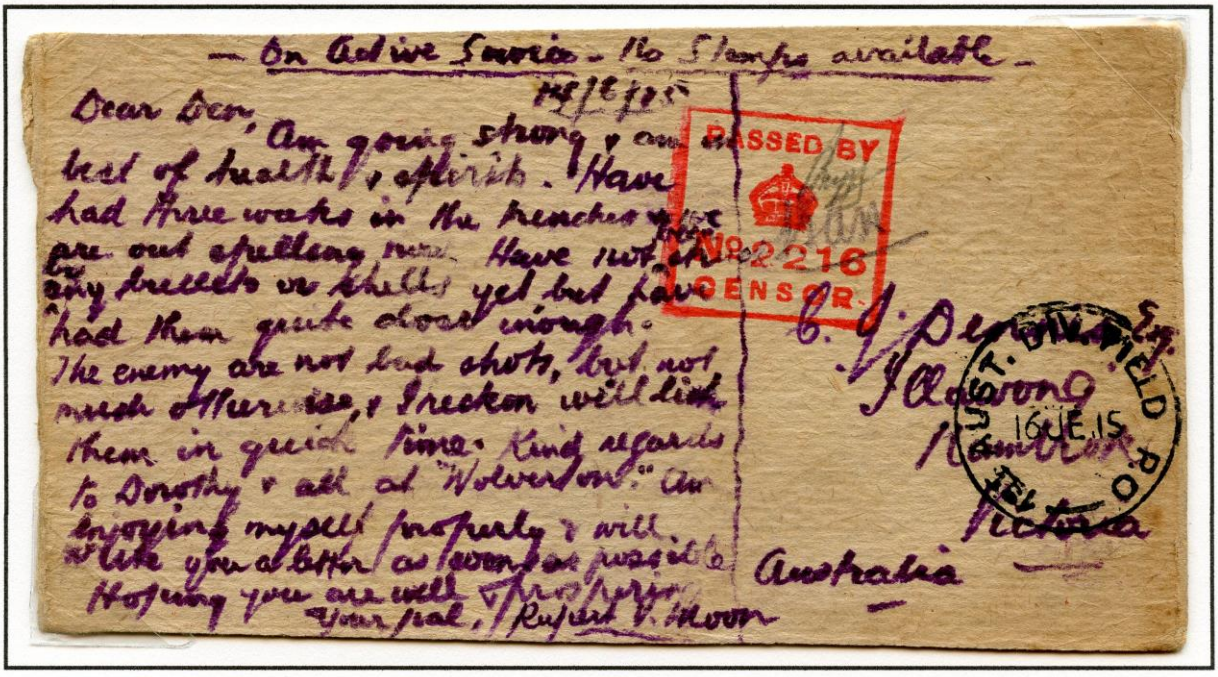

A Drapkins cigarette carton cut to form a postcard with the 1st Australian Divisional Field post office datestamp of the 16th of June 1915.

The card reads:

*"Am going strong & am in the best of health and spirits. Have had three weeks in the trenches and are out spelling now. Have not been hit by any bullets or shells yet but have had them quite close enough. The enemy are not bad shots but not much otherwise, I reckon we'll lick them in quick time".*

This card was written by Lieutenant Rupert Vance Moon of the 4th Light Horse Regiment who was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery at Bullecourt, France on the 12th of May 1917.

At the right is a scan of the reverse of this card.


On Active Service - No Stamps available
Dear Dear, Am going strong & am in the best of health & spirits. Have had three weeks in the trenches & are out spelling now. Have not been hit by any bullets or shells yet but have had them quite close enough. The enemy are not bad shots, but not much otherwise, I reckon we'll lick them in quick time. Kind regards to Dorothy & all at "Wolverton". Am enjoying myself properly & will like you a letter as soon as possible. Hoping you are well. Your pal, Rupert V. Moon
PASSED BY
No 2216
CENSOR
16 JE 15
Australia

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Special Crown cigarette carton**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**

### The *"Shrapnel Pellet"* postcard

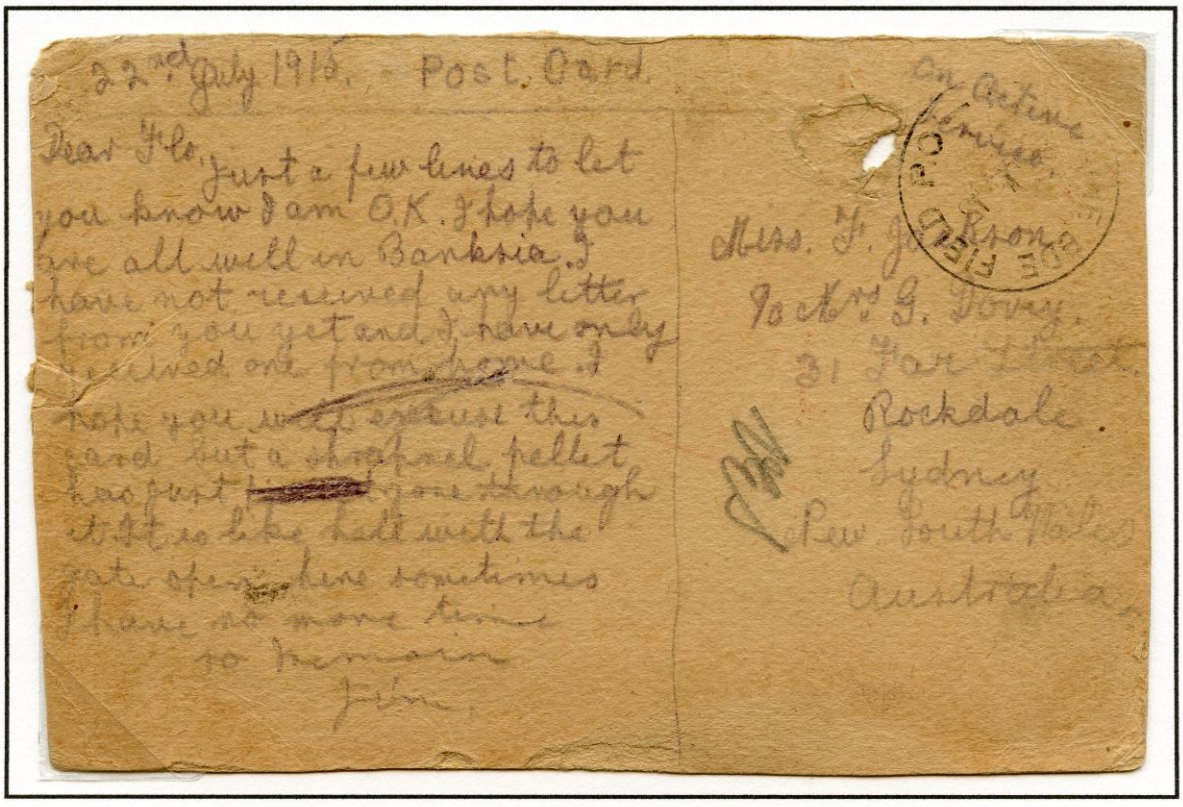
A "Special Crown" Virginia cigarette carton cut down to form a postcard with the 1st Australian Divisional Field post office datestamp of the 22nd of July 1915.

This card provides great insight into the dangerous conditions experienced by the soldiers at Gallipoli. It reads:

*Dear Flo, Just a few lines to let you know I am OK. I hope you are all well in Banksia. I have not received any letter from you yet and I have only received one from home.* ***I hope you will excuse this card but a shrapnel pellet has just gone through it.*** *It is like hell with the gate open here sometimes. I have no more time to remain, Jim".*

This is one of the most significant postcards written at Gallipoli. It was penned by Private James Smith of the 3rd Infantry Battalion who was wounded in France and returned to Australia on the 8th of August 1916.

A scan of the reverse of this card is illustrated at the right.


22nd July 1915. Post Card.

Dear Flo, Just a few lines to let you know I am O.K. I hope you are all well in Banksia. I have not received any letter from you yet and I have only received one from home. I hope you will excuse this card but a shrapnel pellet has just gone through it. It is like hell with the gate open here sometimes I have no more time to remain Jim.

On Active Service

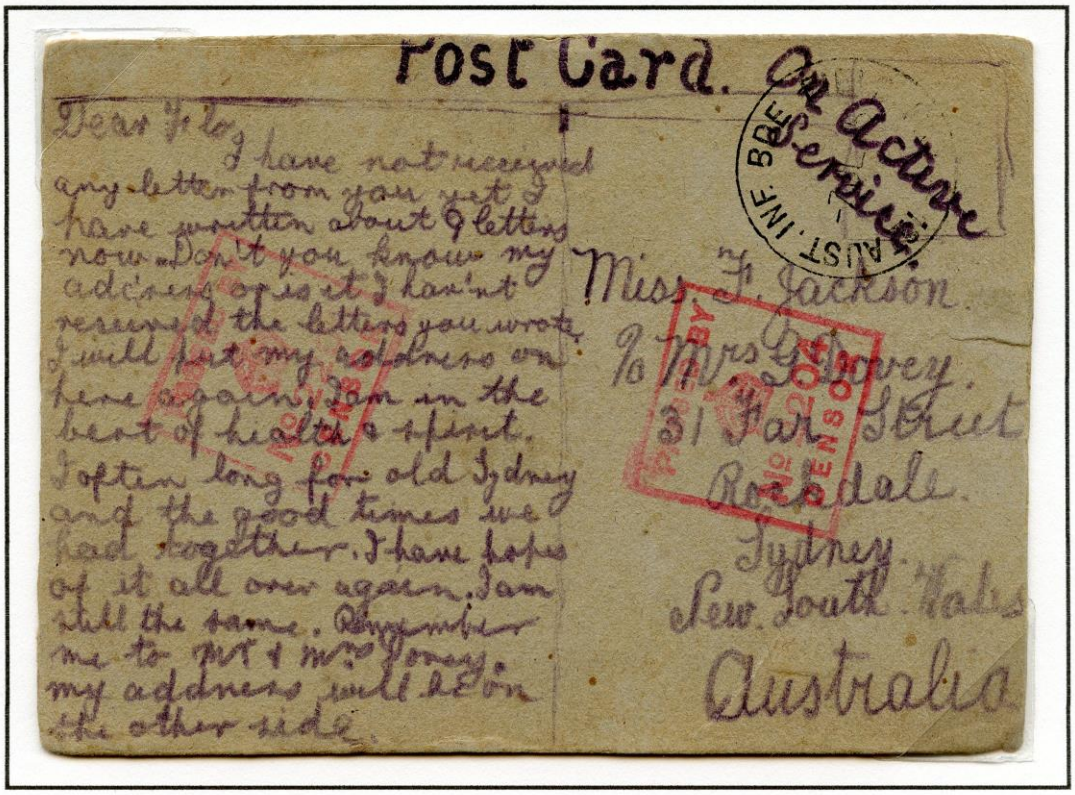
Miss. F. J[illegible]
Post Office
31 Fourth Street
Rockdale
Sydney
New South Wales
Australia

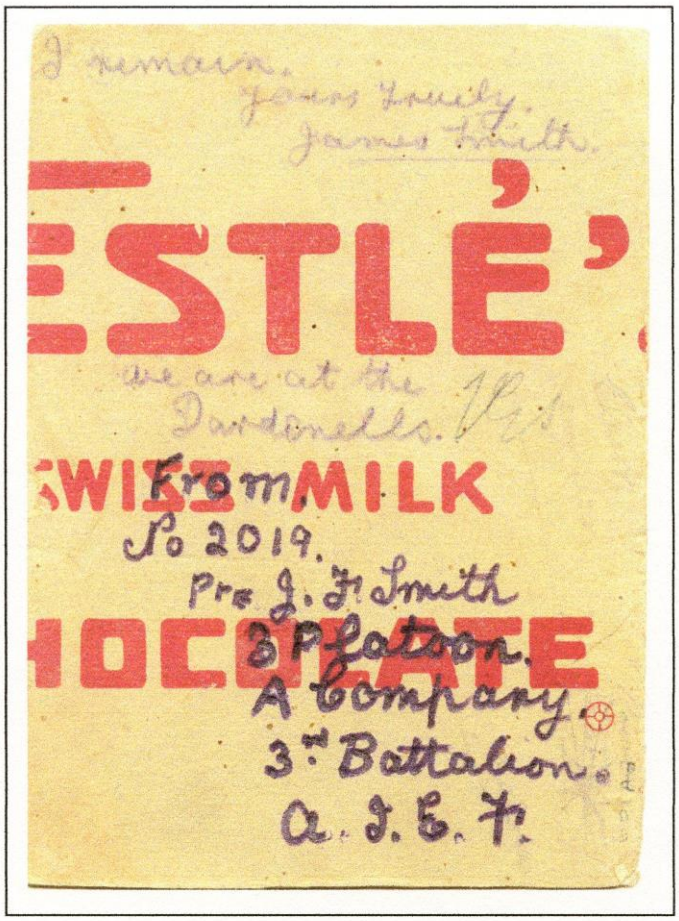
**The Gallipoli Campaign**

**Nestlé chocolate box**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**


Post Card.
On Active Service
1ST. INF. BDE.
AUST.
Miss F. Jackson.
c/o Mrs Gilmore.
31 Fan Street
Rozedale.
Sydney.
New South Wales
Australia
Dear Flo,
I have not received any letter from you yet I have written about 9 letters now. Don't you know my address or is it I haven't received the letters you wrote. I will put my address on here again. I am in the best of health & spirit. I often long for old Sydney and the good times we had together. I have hopes of it all over again. I am still the same. Remember me to Mr & Mrs Jones. My address will be on the other side. I remain. Yours truly, James Smith.




A Nestlé Swiss milk chocolate box cut to form a postcard with the 1st Australian Divisional Field post office datestamp of the 7th of July 1915.

This card confirms the problems with the mail at Gallipoli, and a longing for home and reads:

*"Dear Flo,*
*I have not received any letter from you yet I have written about 9 letters now. Don't you know my address or is it I haven't received the letters you wrote. I will put my address on here again. I am in the best of health & spirit. I often long for old Sydney and the good times we had together. I have hopes of it all over again. I am still the same. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Jones. My address will be on the other side, I remain yours truly, James Smith."*

Private James Smith of the 3rd Infantry Battalion was wounded in France and returned to Australia on the 8th of August 1916.

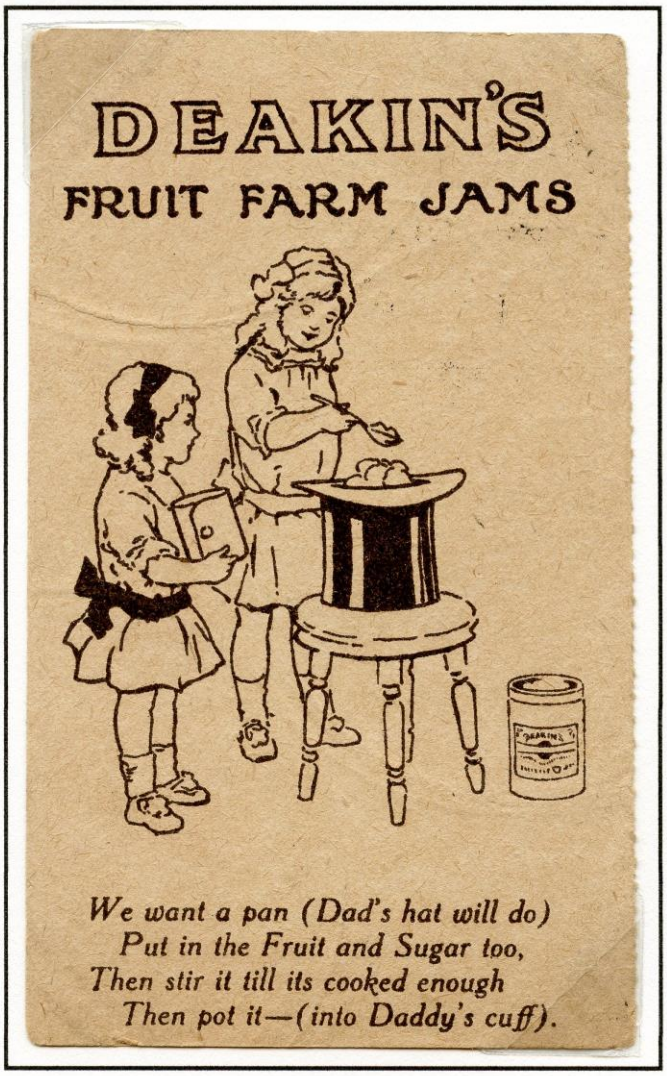
At the left is a scan of the reverse of this card.

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Deakin's Fruit Jams cards**

## The Shortage of Writing Materials

**Recorded usage: 3rd - 23rd August 1915**


DEAKIN'S
FRUIT FARM JAMS
We want a pan (Dad's hat will do)
Put in the Fruit and Sugar too,
Then stir it till its cooked enough
Then pot it—(into Daddy's cuff).

### Army food suppliers providing postcards to solve the shortage of writing materials

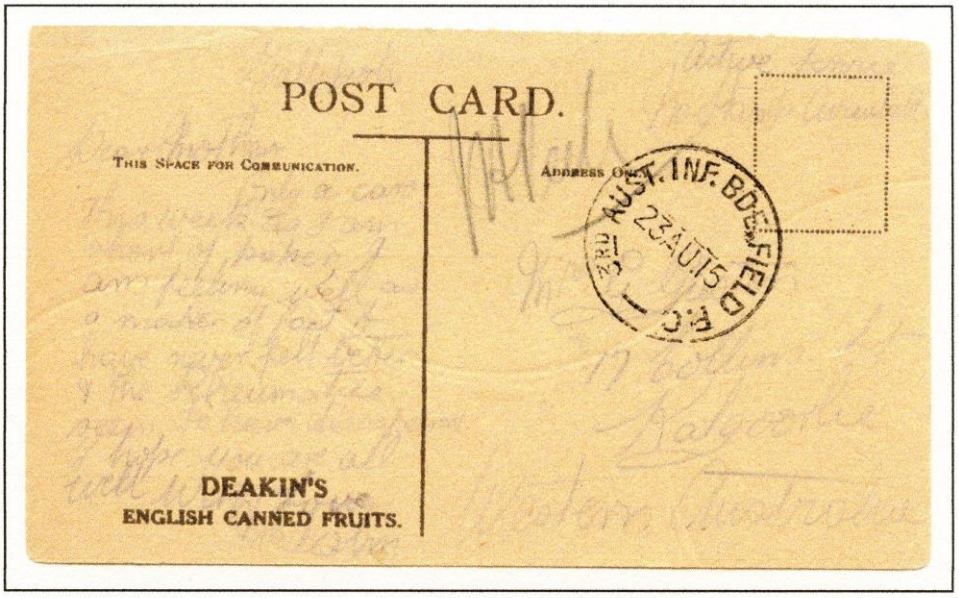
At the left is a Deakin's Fruit Jams postcard which was provided to the soldiers with eight to a box. Deakin's were the principal suppliers of jams to the Allied troops at Gallipoli. **The card has circular indentations consistent with being packed with jam tins.**

Given the extreme shortage of writing materials, these postcards would have been readily used by the troops to send messages home, yet they are extremely rare.

**One of five examples recorded of the Deakin's Fruit Jams postcards sent to Australia.**

### Deakin's jam tin grenades

It is interesting to note that once the Deakin's jam tins had been consumed, the tins were sent back to the beach, where a party of forty soldiers were employed to make "jam tin bombs" using shrapnel or what ever metal fragments they could find. These were the first grenades of the Gallipoli campaign and were vital in the August offensive at Krithia and Lone Pine.



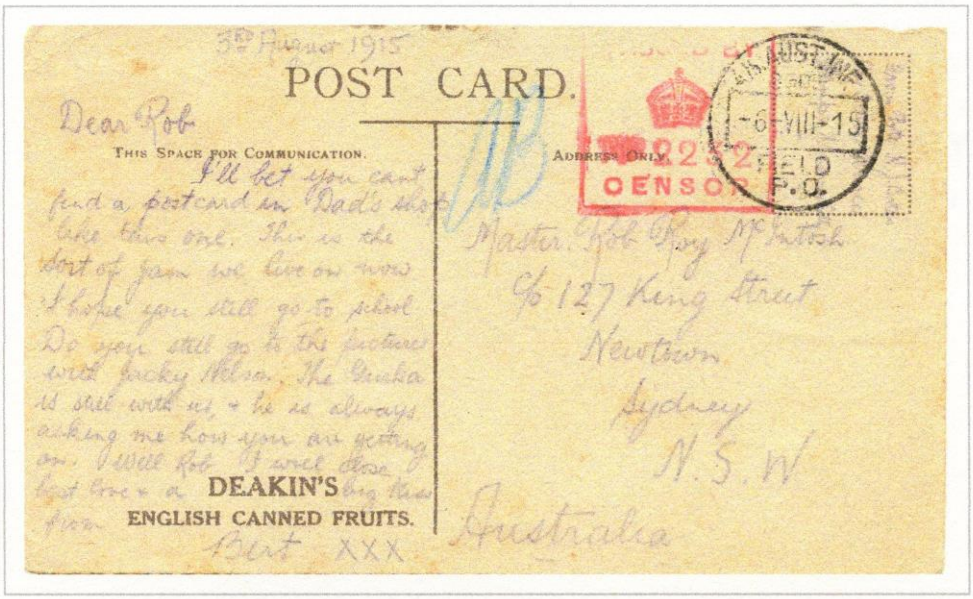

A scan of the reverse of this Deakin's Fruit Jams postcard headed "Gallipoli", and cancelled by the 3rd Infantry Brigade cds dated the 23rd of August 1915. The card was written by Private Malcolm Gaston of the 11th Infantry Battalion who writes *"Only a card this week as I am short of paper"*.

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Deakin's Fruit Jams cards**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 3rd - 23rd August 1915**




The card was written by Private Albert McIntosh of the 14th Infantry Battalion. He writes:

*"I'll bet you can't find a postcard in Dad's shop like this one. This is the sort of jam we live on now."*

The front of this Deakin's Jams postcard was very colourful. It is interesting to note that Private McIntosh has written *"Rob"* above the right hand boy in reference to the addressee, his brother. The card has circular indentations consistent with being packed with jam tins.

**Two other examples of this Deakin's Jam design have been recorded, one to Australia, and another to New Zealand**

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

### "Necessity is the mother of all invention"

"Necessity is the mother of all invention" and as early as May 1915, soldiers began to cut cigarette and chocolate cartons, ammunition boxes, etc. into postcards and write on the reverse to loved ones in Australia. Other inventive materials to write on include sheets of paper folded up into letter form; even tiny cigarette boxes were utilised to send messages home.

**Ledger paper folded to form an envelope** **Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**

A ledger paper folded and glued to form an envelope with the "1st AUST. DIV. FIELD P.O." cds of the 21st of June 1915 (Firebrace Type DS 10) and addressed to England.

### Writing pad paper folded to form an envelope

A sheet of writing pad paper folded and glued to form an envelope with the "1st AUST. DIV. FIELD P.O." cds of the 21st of June 1915 (Firebrace Type DS 10) and addressed to New South Wales.

*Ex Blake*

It is interesting to note that both of these "home made envelopes" were posted on the same day.

**The use of "home made envelopes" during this period is very rare, with only a couple of examples recorded**

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Sheet of paper**

## The Shortage of Writing Materials

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**

A sheet of paper folded to form an entire with the 1st Australian Divisional Field post office datestamp of the 15th of June 1915.

Only a handful of folded paper entires have been recorded from Gallipoli.

This entire was written by Lieutenant Rupert Vance Moon of the 4th Light Horse Regiment who was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery at Bullecourt, France on the 12th of May 1917.

### Award of the Victoria Cross

"His citation reads:

*On the morning of the 12th of May 1917, in a portion of the Hindenburg Line east of Bullecourt, Lieut. Moon displayed most conspicuous bravery in an attack on a German strong point. His own immediate objective was a position in advance of the enemy trench. His orders were, having captured this, to move onto the trench itself and co-operate in the general attack in progress there. Lieut. Moon was hit in the face when advancing to his first objective, which, after a sharp bomb fight, he captured.*

*Leading his men, he engaged in the attack on the trench which the enemy held in force. Here he received another wound in the shoulder which spun him around and dazed him for a while. His men wavered and hesitated, but Lieut. Moon again rushed forward, calling to his men "Come on, you'll not see me left boys". His men rushed after him, and the enemy broke and retired to the strong point in the rear of the trench.*

*Behind there was a sunken road where the enemy had a large dugout from which parties had been continually emerging to reinforce the defenders to the foot. Lieut. Moon's party, now much diminished, fought on in the general attack, which was so strongly pressed that the enemy to the number of 184 surrendered. Lieut. Moon had by this time received another wound. Sitting down among his men with blood and sweat pouring from him he remarked "It was a hard fight boys, I've got three cracks and not one of them good enough for blighty".*

*Then he busied himself with the consolidation of the captured position and went down into the sunken road where he received a bullet through the face, fracturing his jaw. Only then would he consent to retire from the fight. His bravery was magnificent and was largely instrumental in winning a fight against superior numbers, safeguarding the flank of the attack on Bullecourt and gaining 184 prisoners and four machine guns".*

Lt. Rupert Vance Moon, VC.

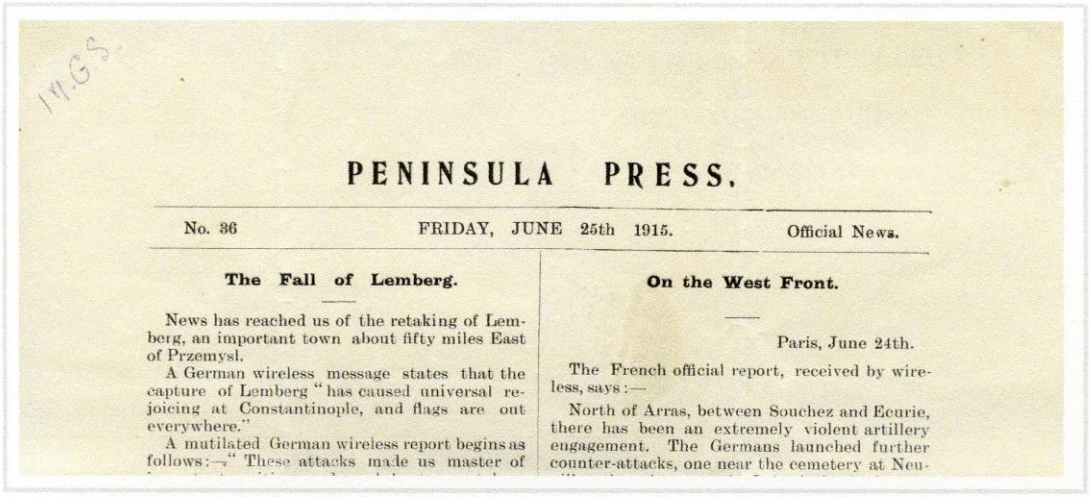
## The Gallipoli Campaign

### The Shortage of Writing Materials

### The Peninsula Press folded to form an entire

### Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915

The Peninsula Press was a one page newspaper published daily and printed by the British Royal Engineers Printing Section at General Headquarters on Imbros Island. These were distributed to the Australian troops, with most of them appearing on notice boards.



PENINSULA PRESS.

No. 36 FRIDAY, JUNE 25th 1915. Official News.

**The Fall of Lemberg.**

News has reached us of the retaking of Lemberg, an important town about fifty miles East of Przemysl.

A German wireless message states that the capture of Lemberg "has caused universal rejoicing at Constantinople, and flags are out everywhere."

A mutilated German wireless report begins as follows:—" These attacks made us master of

**On the West Front.**

Paris, June 24th.

The French official report, received by wireless, says:—

North of Arras, between Souchez and Ecurie, there has been an extremely violent artillery engagement. The Germans launched further counter-attacks, one near the cemetery at Neu-

A scan of the inside of this home made entire showing the masthead of the Peninsula Press.

A copy of the Peninsula Press folded to form an entire with the "1st AUST. INF. BDE. FIELD P.O." cds of the 20th July 1915 (Firebrace Type DS 11) and addressed to the Continental Hotel, Cairo.

*Ex Blake*

**Half a dozen examples of the Peninsula Press folded to form an entire are recorded**

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**A reused envelope**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**

### An extraordinary envelope, stitched together and reused back to Australia

Again, "Necessity is the mother of all invention" and this envelope addressed to Sapper Avery at Gallipoli. It was reused, stitched together, and posted back to his father in Broken Hill. This represents the highest level of the Australian diggers ingenuity in sending mail home.

An envelope from Broken Hill dated May 1915 and addressed to Sapper Louis Avery of the 3rd Field Company of Engineers in Egypt and then forwarded to Gallipoli.

With the shortage of writing materials, Sapper Avery decided to readdress the original envelope back to his father at Broken Hill. To ensure the contents stayed inside the envelope, he stitched it together with a dark multi-coloured thread. The obsolete stamps were crossed out in manuscript and postmarked with the "1st AUST. INF. BDE. FIELD P.O." cds of the 5th July 1915 (Firebrace Type DS 11).

Sapper Avery was awarded the Military Medal for courage and devotion to duty at Ypres on the 6th of October 1917.

*Ex Blake*

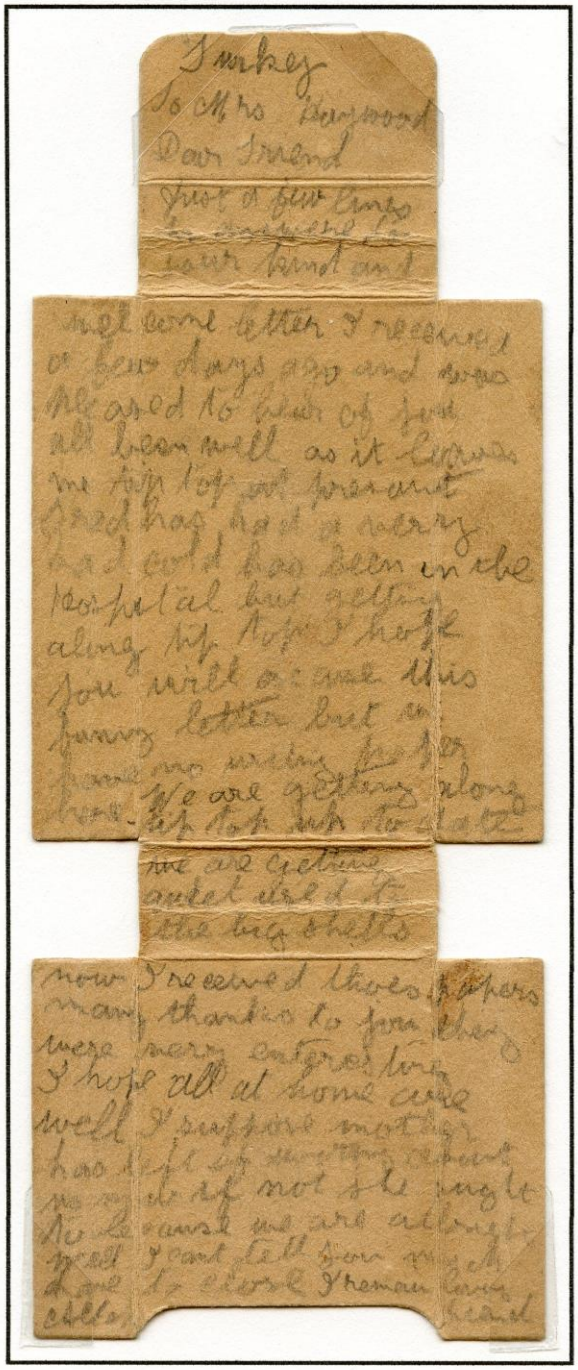
**The only example of an envelope stitched together and returned home to the sender recorded**

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Cigarette box**

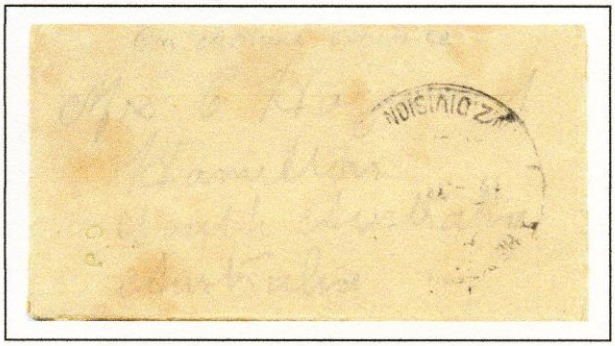
**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**



A Pinewood cigarette box originally containing five cigarettes, where all the available space inside has been utilised to write the message. It has been cancelled by the New Zealand Headquarters datestamp and addressed to South Australia.

The message reads ***"You will excuse this funny letter but we have no writing paper here.*** *We are getting along tip top to date".*



A scan of the front of this cigarette box, folded to the size that it was mailed through the post.

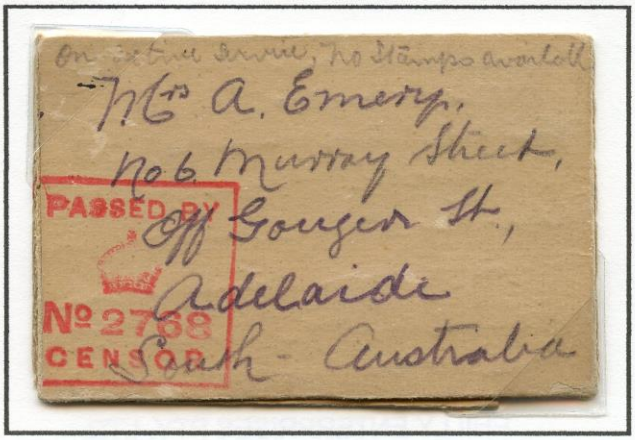
**Four examples of cigarette boxes posted from Gallipoli are recorded. All are addressed to South Australia and are posted within two weeks of each other.**

## The Gallipoli Campaign

**Cigarette box**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**




Another cigarette box originally containing five cigarettes, where all the available space inside has been utilised to write the message. It is cancelled on the reverse by the 3rd Light Horse Field post office datestamp of the 24th of June 1915 and addressed to South Australia.

The box was written by Sergeant Howard Hahn of the 9th Light Horse Brigade who writes *"Dear Sister, I have just received your letters and papers. These are the first I've received for over two months"*. Promoted to Lieutenant, Howard Hahn served throughout the war and returned to Australia on the 10th of July 1919.

**Four cigarette boxes are recorded posted from Gallipoli**

A photograph of troops from the 9th Light Horse Brigade in training at the Gawler Military Camp around January 1915. Sergeant Harold Hahn is pictured at the top left.

## The Gallipoli Campaign

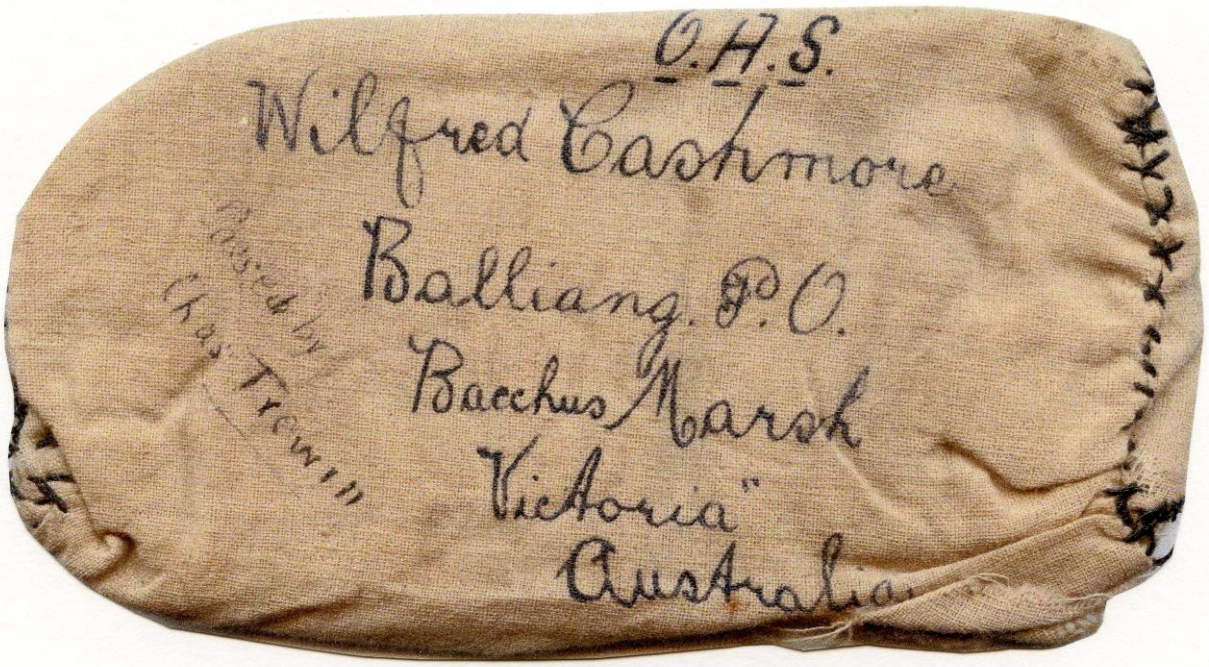
**Calico bag**

**The Shortage of Writing Materials**

**Recorded usage: 29th May - 23rd August 1915**

Given the chronic shortage of writing materials at Gallipoli, the soldier's ingenuity knew no bounds. The calico bag below, stitched together to form a parcel, is one of the most extraordinary postal items to emerge from the conflict.

**An extraordinary calico bag stitched together to form a parcel**




A piece of calico bag, probably from a "dilly bag", stitched together to form a parcel and endorsed "O.A.S." and addressed to Victoria.

**The only recorded use of a calico bag sent from Gallipoli**

### Censorship of the Calico Bag

The bag is censored at the left "Passed by/ Chas Trewin" who was promoted to Lieutenant of the 4th Light Horse Regiment at Gallipoli. The bag was written by Private Jack Cashmore of the same regiment to his cousin and has no postal markings. Although both soldiers served at the Dardanelles and in the Australian Light Horse Campaign from Egypt to Syria, I believe this item was posted at Gallipoli.

### Proof that the bag was mailed from Gallipoli

During the Light Horse conflict of the Middle East from 1916 to 1918, the British Army operated a strict postal and censorship system. All items sent during this conflict were censored by the British and not by the Australian postal service. Given that this bag was censored by an Australian front line officer, it can only have been sent through the Australian field post office system from Gallipoli.

### Continuing supply of writing materials after August 1915

The availability of postcards and paper to write home began to improve from around July 1915. The Australians were preparing for the August offensive and supplies of writing materials, from a moral point of view, were crucial at this time of the war. The 23rd of August 1915 is the last recorded usage of a "home made" postcard.